

# Bagram News Express

Start Right, Finish Strong | Vol. 3 Issue 15, October 18, 2009

## Airman over firefight: "I won't forget them as long as I live"

By Capt. David Faggard  
455th Air Expeditionary Wing  
Public Affairs

**BAGRAM AIRFIELD, Afghanistan** -- Those are the words of Capt. Gordon Olde, an F-15E weapon system officer following a battle at a remote military base about 10 miles from Pakistan that erupted on the morning of Oct. 3, 2009; what happened that day highlighted the unbreakable bond between Airmen and Soldiers.

In a steep valley in the Nuristan Province in Northeast Afghanistan, Combat Outposts Keating and Fritsche were attacked by hundreds of militants from multiple firing positions, according to an International Security Assistance Force statement.

Within minutes, U.S. Air Force aircraft were on scene and engaging the enemy, according to Army 1st Lt. Cason Shrode, COP Keating's fires support officer.

"We received a heavy volley of fire," the lieutenant said referring to the initial wave of enemies. However, "we had so many different assets up in the air . . . they were stacked on so many different levels...we had everything we needed."

Lieutenant Shrode, working from his secondary Tactical Operations Center because his primary location was on fire from



**BAGRAM AIRBASE, Afghanistan** -- An F-15E Strike Eagle, like the one pictured here, battled insurgents at Combat Outposts Keating and Fritsche, where nearly 100 militants were killed by the combined response that included Afghan soldiers as well as U.S. air and ground units. (U.S. Air Force photo/Tech. Sgt. John Jung)

the attack, was in contact with Senior Airman Angel Montes, a Joint Terminal Attack Controller from San Diego, Calif., and Airman 1st Class Stephen Kellams, a Tampa, Fla. native, serving as a radio operator maintenance and driver, or ROMAD for short. Both Airmen are deployed from the 13th Air Support Operations Squadron, Fort Carson, Colo. and were at a Forward Operating Base about 20 miles away.

With buildings already on fire, a formation of two F-15E

Strike Eagles rolled in overhead and immediately saw the enemy.

"They [the enemy] were on the surrounding ridges," said Captain Olde, F-15E weapon systems officer referring to the COP surrounded by steep mountain-peaks on three sides. "A major attack was apparent to us from the moment we showed up. I knew

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# FIREFIGHT

something big was unfolding before our eyes; all I could think about were the guys on the ground.”

The first F-15Es on the scene were helmed by Capt. Isaac Bell, pilot, and Capt. Olde, as well as Capt. Dave Nierenberg, pilot, and British Flight Lieutenant James Siwicki, a WSO. All aircrew were part of the 335th Expeditionary Fighter Squadron deployed from Seymour Johnson Air Force Base, N.C.

Captain Mike Polidor and 1st Lt. Aaron Dove arrived later over the COP and assumed the roles of tactical-air-controller-airborne.

“That’s something we don’t often train for but they executed it perfectly by funneling all the JTAC’s information to the other jets that showed up,” Captain Olde said. “They did an incredible job and no-doubt saved numerous lives on the ground due to their organized and methodical employment of airpower.”

Communication on the

ground was scarce initially due to the very harsh terrain, according to the F-15E aircrew. However, they quickly developed a way around this by splitting up their typical two-ship formation and placed one aircraft over a nearby Forward Operating Base some 20 miles away. At this FOB, the JTAC teams were linked to Lieutenant Shrode, the fires support officer via F-15E aircraft.

“We were in disbelief as to what was going on,” said San Antonio-native Staff Sergeant Adam Burns, the JTAC non-commissioned officer-in-charge. “We had every air asset we could imagine; we pushed so many aircraft that we never really worried about ammo conservation.”

Sergeant Burns and his ROMAD, Staff Sgt. Sean Quinn a Memphis, Tenn. native, would later find themselves infiltrating into COP Keating as part of American reinforcements.

“We were able to get comms with the Apaches supporting Keating and we relayed for them to the JTAC that

[insurgents] were inside the wire,” Captain Olde, a WSO with four years in the Air Force said about the Army’s UH-64 helicopters.

After a successful bomb run, Captain Olde and Captain Bell went back in with their cannon and employed a “single strafe pass, then had to head back to refuel,” Captain Olde said handing the fight over to fellow squadron members.

“I cued the Sniper pod to the burning COP and it hit me how serious things were,” said 1st Lieutenant Aaron Dove, a WSO and Hudson, Wisc. native. “The main thing in my mind was to do my job well because this was a time when the guys on the ground needed us most.”

Lieutenant Dove and Captain Polidor were two that set themselves over the nearby FOB acting as a radio relay and coordinated airstrikes of a B-1B Lancer bomber and F-15Es all while coordinating between two

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**SOUTHWEST ASIA -- A B-1B Lancer, similar to this one, battled insurgents at Combat Outposts Keating and Fritsche, where nearly 100 militants were killed by the combined response that included Afghan soldiers as well as U.S. air and ground units. (U.S. Air Force photo)**

# FIREFIGHT

bases and Army Apache helicopters with a thunderstorm rapidly approaching.

"We coordinated and relayed many airstrikes with various aircraft," Lieutenant Dove said. "By the time we got home, we had been airborne for 8 hours, strafed mountainous terrain in dangerous weather, and integrated more than 30 bombs on targets around Keating – none of which caused any friendly injuries or fatalities or civilian casualties."

Despite claims from the Taliban, both outposts were in the process of a scheduled repositioning as part of a security strategy to focus more on populated areas, according to Combined Joint Task Force-82 offi-

cials here.

"Despite what the Taliban say, the COP was not overrun," said Lt. Col. Clarence Counts, CJTF-82 public affairs officer. "Our American and Afghan forces fought valiantly and defeated a highly coordinated attack inflicting heavy casualties."

"The biggest thing I gained from this whole ordeal is that the real heroes out here in Afghanistan are the guys on the ground – especially those who gave their lives so that their friends could go home to their families," Lieutenant Dove said.

Nearly 100 militants were killed by the combined response that included Afghan soldiers as well as U.S. air and ground units. Eight Americans and

three Afghans were killed, while nine Americans and 11 Afghans were wounded, according to CJTF-82 officials.

"There is no doubt that without the incredible air support we received, it would have been a much worse day," said Army Lt. Col. Robert Brown, 3-61 Cavalry commander from the 4th Infantry Division of Fort Carson, Colo. "Your ability to keep a steady flow of aircraft and ordnance on the enemy turned what could have been a terrible defeat into a hard fought victory."

My hat goes off to those Americans on the ground who fought so bravely, especially those who gave their lives serving their country," Captain Olde said. "I won't forget them for as long as I live."



**BAGRAM AIRFIELD, Afghanistan --** Brig. Gen. Steven Kwast, commander of the 455th Air Expeditionary Wing, surveys the landscape outside the wire here, recently, as 2nd Lt. Joshua Frizzell, 455th Expeditionary Security Forces Squadron, briefs Lt. Gen. Mike Hostage, commander of U.S. Air Forces Central Command on security measures in place. General Hostage was visiting Bagram as part of his role as the senior Air Force leader, USAFCENT. Lieutenant Frizzell is deployed from Andrews Air Force Base, Md. and hails from Memphis, Tenn. (U.S. Air Force photo/Tech. Sgt. John Jung)



# Air Force officials release fleece wear policy

By Brad Jessmer  
Air Force Uniform Office  
Public Affairs

**WRIGHT-PATTERSON  
AIR FORCE BASE, Ohio  
(AFNS)** -- The 98th Air Force Virtual Uniform Board released a policy message here Oct. 9 for wearing the new Air Force sage green fleece as an outer garment for the airman battle uniform.

According to the message, the sage green fleece may only be worn over the ABU top, and is not authorized to be worn solely over a T-shirt, thermal underwear and similar undergarments, when worn as an outer garment.

According to the message signed by Lt. Gen. Richard Y. Newton III, deputy chief of staff for Manpower and Personnel at, Headquarters U.S. Air Force, Washington, authorized wear of the sage green fleece requires the following:

- a Velcro ABU print last name tape with dark blue block lettering, centered between the zipper and sleeve seam on the wearer's right chest,
- a Velcro ABU print U.S. Air Force tape with dark blue block lettering, adjacent to the name tape and centered between the zipper and sleeve seam on the wearers left chest,
- a Velcro subdued cloth rank with a solid sage green background, flushed and centered above the last name tape on the wearer's right chest,
- the fleece must remain zipped no lower than halfway between the name tape and the collar,
- the collar must be folded over and resting on the shoulder,



**WRIGHT- PATTERSON AIR FORCE BASE, Ohio -- Pictured are sage green fleece outer garments with proper placement of name and rank tapes. (U.S. Air Force photo)**

chest and back when the zipper is not completely zipped,

- the bottom length of the fleece must be as close to length of ABU top as possible,
- the sleeves must be worn down at all times, and
- the fleece must be kept in a neat, serviceable and professional appearance at all times.

Items authorized for wear with the fleece include black or sage green leather, suede or knit gloves, black or sage green watch caps, black scarves that are tucked in, and black ear muffs.

The uniform board has authorized wear of the sage green

fleece without name tapes and rank as an outer garment until Oct 1, 2010. Both the black and the green fleece without tapes and rank may be worn as a liner to the all-purpose environmental clothing system, or APECS. The black fleece will phase-out Oct 1, 2010.

New sage green fleece outer garments will be made available first to deployed Airmen.

Airmen with questions regarding this article should address them through their chain of command, or by calling the Air Force Personnel Center at 800-525-0102, or DSN 665-5000.

# 455th AEW HISTORIAN PAGE

By Doug Beckstead  
455th Air Expeditionary Wing  
Historian

Like many places throughout the world, modern borders are something forced upon the inhabitants of an area by foreign governments seen as conquerors. The borders of what we now call Afghanistan were only established within the last century.

The term Afghan does not even appear in writing until the third century (c. 200 AD) when it first appears in Persian texts. In Old Persian, the term Afghan is translated as “noisy” or “unruly.” Some even try to downplay it to mean “less than sedate.”

When British historian-diplomat Mountstuart Elphinstone visited the country in 1809 he noted that the people did not refer to themselves as Afghans nor did they call the region Afghanistan although he did note that they were aware that others did so. Elphinstone referred to the people inhabiting the region as “the Pashuns,” a direct reference to the Pashtun ethnic group that makes up the majority of the population in southeastern Afghanistan and northwestern Pakistan.

Afghanistan’s borders were surveyed by the British at the end of the nineteenth century with the purpose of creating the best possible buffer state between their colony of India and the inexorable tide of Russian annexations in Central Asia. Thus, the northern Afghan border follows the historic Oxus River (now known as the Amu Darya) and the Hari Rud in the west along the eastern border of



Map of Afghanistan

Iran.

The “dip” on the northwest border is the result of the Russians pulling a military move to secure valuable oasis before finally agreeing to a fixed border. The southern border crosses a desert wasteland that has historically been a deathtrap to armies trying to march across it.

The eastern boundary between Afghanistan and Pakistan was drawn by Sir Mortimer Durand who painstakingly staked it out to cut through the center of the Pashtun people, the largest ethnic group in the region. His expectation was that it would limit Afghanistan’s political resources while creating every possible terrain

advantage for the British as the line runs north of the Toba Kakar Range of mountains.

The finger that points out of the northeast corner and just touches China was forced on Afghanistan by the British to create a buffer between Russian and India. At the time, Durand had no idea that in 1947 India would gain its independence from the British Crown making the whole exercise a moot point.

Within the region now called “Afghanistan,” four major ethnic groups (each of which can be further subdivided into smaller tribal units) consist of the Pashtuns to the south of the Hindu Kush Mountains and the Turkmen, Uzbeks and Tajiks north of the Hindu Kush range.



# NEWS BRIEFS

**IMMUNIZATIONS:** Are your immunizations up to date? Active duty members are required to stay current on all immunizations during their deployment. Report to your nearest medical treatment facility to check your status and get vaccinated. For questions, contact Task Force Medical Public Health, 431-4426.

**NEWCOMERS INPROCESSING:** All Air Force members are required to inprocess with PERSCO. The inprocessing will start your combat pay entitlements. If you have been in the AOR for at least 30 days and you are not receiving combat pay, visit Finance in the crow's nest tower on Camp Cunningham. If you know for a fact that you did not inprocess with PERSCO, please visit PERSCO located in Bldg. 700 near the passenger terminal. Call 431-2070/4409 for more information.

**COMBAT O:** Combat Orientation is Wednesday at 0100Z/0530L at the MWR Clamshell (Near the Four Corners). Uniform is Air Force PT uniform. This is a mandatory briefing for all Air Force personnel assigned to Bagram Airfield. Accountability is tracked and will be forwarded to the first sergeants.

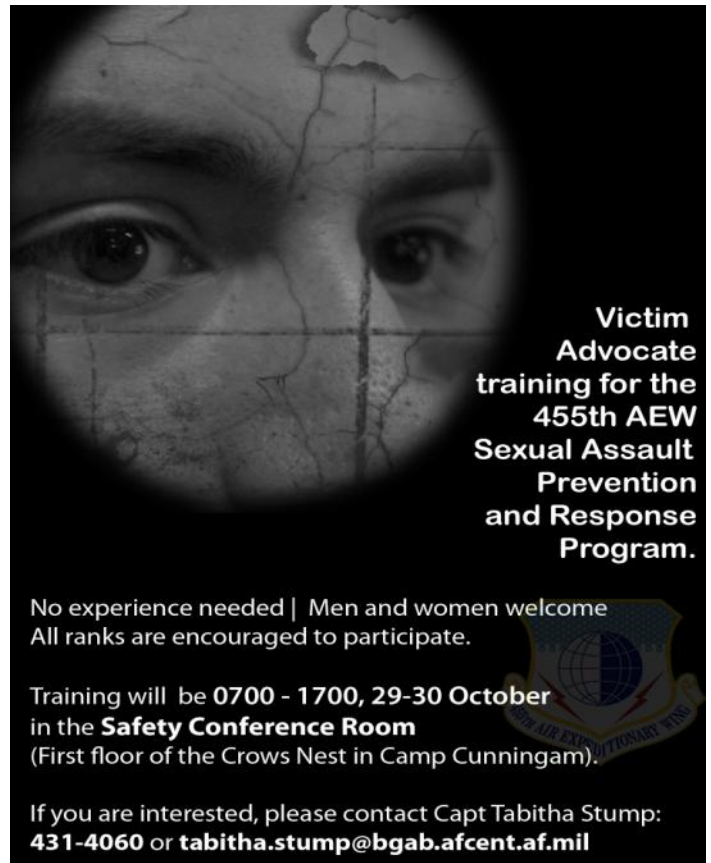


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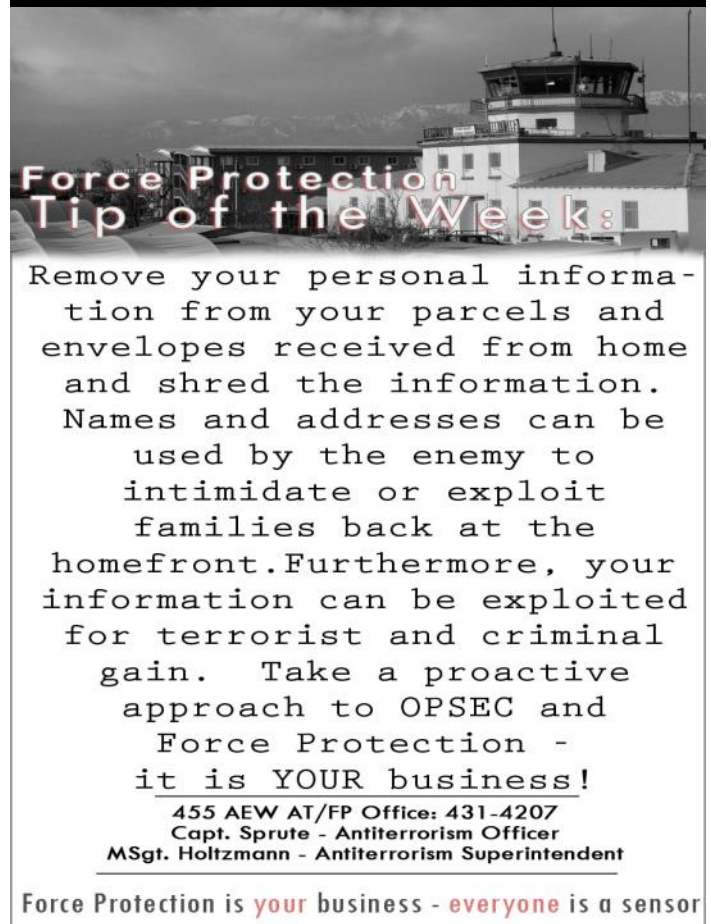


**Victim Advocate training for the 455th AEW Sexual Assault Prevention and Response Program.**

No experience needed | Men and women welcome  
All ranks are encouraged to participate.

Training will be **0700 - 1700, 29-30 October**  
in the **Safety Conference Room**  
(First floor of the Crows Nest in Camp Cunningham).

If you are interested, please contact Capt Tabitha Stump:  
**431-4060** or **tabitha.stump@bgab.afcent.af.mil**



**Force Protection Tip of the Week:**

Remove your personal information from your parcels and envelopes received from home and shred the information. Names and addresses can be used by the enemy to intimidate or exploit families back at the homefront. Furthermore, your information can be exploited for terrorist and criminal gain. Take a proactive approach to OPSEC and Force Protection - **it is YOUR business!**

**455 AEW AT/FP Office: 431-4207**  
**Capt. Sprute - Antiterrorism Officer**  
**MSgt. Holtzmann - Antiterrorism Superintendent**

**Force Protection is *your* business - *everyone* is a sensor**



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455 EAEF - MSgt. Cliff Smith

335 EFS (F-15) - Capt. David Nierenberg

79 EFS (F-16CJ) - Capt. Bryan Finkel

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